

La Crosse FRO, February 2003



U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

La Crosse FRO Accomplishment Report

Annual MOCC Instructor Meeting 02/04/2003

The Annual Region 3 Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) instructor team meeting was held in February at the new Green Bay Fishery Resources Office (FRO). The event was hosted by Green Bay FRO Project Leader, Mark Holey and the Great Lakes Lead Instructor, Stewart Cogswell. The scheduling and training session was chaired by Region 3 MOCC Coordinator Dave Wedan, and co-chaired by the Regional Safety Manager Patrick McDermott. A total of fourteen MOCC instructors overcame poor winter driving conditions to attend. Adam Kowalski from Alpena FRO was welcomed to the group as a recently certified instructor. Topping the agenda was the development of the FY2003 MOCC schedule, which includes the required basic three-day MOCC course, the one-day Airboat Module and the four-day Open-Water (Great Lakes/Big Water) Module with MOCC. This year only, there will be a two-day version of the Open-Water course for those interested who have already taken the basic introductory MOCC course, and would like to receive the Open-Water training only. MOCC course scheduling, descriptions, and registration information will be sent to all regional project leaders in early March. Other agenda topics included an emphasis on boating safety, accident reporting procedures and the Safety Management Information System (SMIS), MOCC budget, the five-year MOCC refresher, accomplishment-reporting system (ARS), and recommended and required equipment. Also covered was instructor and course development and standardization. Excellent instructor and student manuals, materials, and CD's have been developed and supplied by Chris Horsch of NCTC along with the development of a service-wide MOCC training data base. MOCC and Airboat Instructor Bill Thrune gave a presentation on the "Go-Devil," a possible alternative to airboats in certain shallow water situations. Airboat Lead Instructor, Robert Drieslein and Open-Water leader Cogswell lead training and scheduling sessions with their instructor crews.



Dave Wedan

Director's Visit Highlights 2004 Budget & Fisheries Vision 02/04/2003



Service Director Steve Williams braved the cold and snow that blanketed the upper Midwest and received a warm 'Coulee Country' welcome when he visited the Fish and Wildlife Resource Center in Onalaska, Wisconsin on February 4 to highlight the \$1.3

billion budget that President Bush has proposed to fund the agency in 2004. Speaking at a public news conference to a crowd of reporters, congressional staffers, concerned citizens, and Service employees from more than a dozen area offices, Williams noted that Congressional approval of the proposed 2004 budget would represent a \$120 million appropriations increase for the agency since 2002, demonstrating a continued commitment to better protect America's natural resources and support community partners in conservation efforts. Key features of the proposed budget include: a \$25.5 million increase for the National Wildlife Refuge System to protect trust resources, improve public access to recreation, and better serve surrounding communities; a \$15 million increase for cooperative conservation initiatives with partners; an \$11 million increase to prevent the spread of invasive plants and animals; an \$8 million increase for fish hatchery operations and maintenance; and a \$1 million increase to combat aquatic nuisance species.

Since becoming Service director nearly a year ago, Williams has also placed a personal priority on reinvigorating the agency's Fisheries program, largely through a 'Vision for the Future' initiative that is supported by many partners. "Sport fishing is important to millions of Americans, not only as a recreational activity, but as a family experience that strengthens links between children, parents, and grandparents, and in doing so, helps guide future generations of our citizens," said Williams. "The Fisheries program's 'Vision for the Future', with the backing of this Presidential budget request, will help the Service better support the sportfishing community, which has historically been one of this agency's most valuable and valued partners. It also will help efforts to restore imperiled species." In Wisconsin, some of these proposed fishery initiatives could result in an additional \$167,000 for brood stock isolation and mussel propagation facilities at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery, \$95,000 to support lake sturgeon restoration on the Menominee Indian Reservation, and \$39,000 for native fish restoration in the Great Lakes.

Following the public press conference, Fish and Wildlife Resource Center staff hosted a 'tasteful' employee reception for the director that featured smoked sturgeon from the upper Mississippi River. Before his evening departure, Williams also had an opportunity to meet with project leaders and tour the Fish and Wildlife Resource Center to learn more about the diverse duties that Service offices fulfill in this portion of the Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region.

Mark Steingraeber

Fishery and Refuge Programs Highlighted at La Crosse Sport Show 02/09/2003



Conservation partnership achievements and opportunities in the Service's Fishery and Refuge programs were highlighted to the public with a variety of informative displays exhibited by staff from four La Crosse area offices (Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge-La Crosse District, La Crosse Fishery Resources Office, La Crosse Fish Health Center, Genoa National Fish Hatchery) and members of their Friends Group organizations during the 26th Annual La Crosse Boat, Sports, and Travel Show. This mid-winter event was held February 6-9 near the banks of the upper Mississippi River at the spacious La Crosse Exhibition Center. A total of nearly 3,000 visitors entered the Service's booth, which was expanded nearly 50% in size this year when the La Crosse National Weather Service office made most of the unused area in the rear of its adjoining booth available for fish and wildlife displays. An inviting array of diverse educational materials, photographs, videos, taxidermy mounts, live fish, and

animal pelts were prominently displayed here near the main entrance to the exhibition hall. These displays encouraged visitors of all ages to learn more about their local fauna and flora and the Service's role in protecting, restoring, and enhancing trust resources for the continuing benefit of all Americans. Natural resource topics emphasized by the Service at the 2003 show included: plant and waterfowl responses to summer water level reductions in parts of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge; nature observation and photography opportunities on refuges; the National Wildlife Refuge System centennial celebration; aquatic nuisance species awareness and control efforts; freshwater mussel and native fish restoration programs; and recent fish disease outbreaks and implications. The taxidermy displays, mussel shells, animal pelts, live fish, and wildlife coloring books were very popular with children and also helped draw accompanying adults to the Service booth. After entering the booth, visitors could leisurely browse through printed informational materials, vote for their favorite refuge scene in a Friends Group-sponsored photography contest, identify live native fishes, watch a video of "flying" Asian carp, discuss environmental topics of concern with Service representatives, and learn more about the Friends Group organizations that support Service offices. The opportunity to personally exchange natural resource information in a short period of time with the large and diverse audience that attends this annual outdoors show makes participation here a valuable outreach tool for all Service offices in the La Crosse area.

Mark Steingraeber

Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services receives Award 02/12/2003

Arnie Swartz President of Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services receives an award from Scott Yess (La Crosse FRO) for the group's support of the fishery program. This new group recently completed a recruiting brochure explaining the organizations mission and goals. Additionally six members; Arnie Swartz, John Derrickson, Julie Derrickson, Gil Hanesworth, Chuck Snyder, and Tom Zieja assisted the FWS in staffing the Service's booth at the La Crosse Sports Show. Upcoming projects include mussel cage construction at Genoa NFH, developing a fund raising partnership with the Upper Mississippi River Refuge Friends group and a fishing day.



Scott Yess